Lake Caroline Property Owners Association History

The 1960s

In the fall of 1967, American Realty Service Corporation of Memphis, Tennessee, began searching for a location for its 50th development. The company anticipated growing demand for recreational facilities between the heavily populated Richmond and Washington metropolitan areas.

American Realty assigned the Lake Caroline project to Ralph Gibson, a Caroline County native, to identify a suitable location. Gibson enlisted the help of his friend, fellow Caroline County resident Mack Wright. Together, they selected Stevens Mill Run—a modest stream fed by numerous springs. Stevens Mill Run flows into Polecat Creek just beyond Route 1, which in turn joins the Mattaponi River just beyond Route 301. At the time, the surrounding area consisted primarily of farmland.

American Realty formed a separate corporation, Lake Caroline, Inc., to develop the 1,400-acre Lake Caroline community. Plans called for 2,097 lots, 22 miles of roads, and a 277-acre lake with 8.0 miles of shoreline. Construction of the 1,750-foot-long dam was completed on August 18, 1969, and Hurricane Camille filled the lake shortly thereafter.

James and Lena Carlson purchased the first lot in July 1968. The State Corporation Commission approved the Lake Caroline Property Owners Association, Inc., on August 28, 1968, and the Association held its first official meeting on September 18, 1968.

At that meeting, George Carroll, President, and Barbara Blanton, Secretary, were authorized to execute and sign deeds. Construction of the swimming pool and Lodge began, and bank accounts were established with Union Bank and Trust.

In October 1969, Bill Bryant was elected President and Treasurer.

The 1970s

By the summer of 1970, most of the lots had been sold, the lake had been stocked with fish, and it was time for the American Realty and Lake Caroline, Inc. era to come to an end. A new era began, with responsibility for the community resting entirely with its members. In August 1970, eighteen candidates appeared on the ballot for the election of the first nine members of the Board of Directors.

On September 24, 1970, the newly elected Board of Directors met with representatives of American Realty to formally receive the Association's minutes, books, and official seal. Two

deeds transferring all common property to the Lake Caroline Property Owners Association were also executed. In addition, the Association received a bank account containing $91,147 and $17,280 in outstanding dues. The Lodge and swimming pool, which American Realty had built for the Association, carried a remaining mortgage balance of $45,827, which the Association assumed.

The newly elected Board faced responsibilities for which few of its members had prior experience. Charged with protecting the interests of approximately 1,600 property owners and maintaining the Association's common assets, the Board assumed full responsibility for the community. With the transfer complete, American Realty had fulfilled its contractual obligations.

Maintenance needs and resident concerns were beginning to emerge, yet Lake Caroline had no employees or office facilities. Under the leadership of President Sam Herchek, the Board included Frank Binney, President; Eunice Burgess, Vice President; and Kenneth Hayes, Secretary-Treasurer. To manage the community's operations, the Board organized nine service committees, with each director serving as chair of one committee.

The original committees were Security, Grounds, Finance, Building, Lake, Recreation, Common Areas, Lodge, and Newspaper. Many of these committees continued to serve the community for more than thirty-five years.

American Realty established both a snack bar and a "country store." The snack bar operated from the Lodge, while the country store was located in the Marina Building and operated by Ron Thomas. Neither venture proved successful. The Association leased the snack bar to Barry Carlson for the summer of 1971. Mr. Thomas later sold the marina property, and the Association sold the snack bar equipment.

By May 1971, Lake Caroline had grown to thirty-five homes. With daily operations increasing and maintenance needs expanding, the community required a dedicated office. The Association leased the office space previously used by American Realty in Ladysmith until space became available in the Lodge. The Lake Caroline office moved to its current location in January 1972.

During these early years, the Association achieved many accomplishments that gave the community a strong foundation.

The LCPOA also experienced its share of challenges and successes. While the developer had established the original rules and regulations, the Board was responsible for creating additional policies, enforcing existing regulations, and adapting them to the community's growing needs.

American Realty built an attractive stone guardhouse, but it was too small and required the installation of plumbing and a septic system. The campground also remained unfinished, and the Association assumed responsibility for completing the project on its five-acre site.

During its early years, the campground was extremely popular, with twenty campsites that were frequently filled. Reservations were often required during summer holidays.

Road quality was a concern from the beginning. Although the roads were not fully completed when the developer left, they remained covered by the warranty bond. The bonding company subsequently hired another contractor to complete the work.

In the summer of 1972, Hurricane Agnes struck Lake Caroline. Trees were blown down, Boston Cove flooded, and docks drifted across the lake. Once again, however, the dam protected the community, just as it had three years earlier when Hurricane Camille filled the lake.

After careful consideration, the Board concluded that the community's best interests would be served by contracting with a professional security agency. On March 31, 1973, Dobson Security Agency was hired.

By 1973, the Lake Caroline newsletter had completed its third year of publication but still lacked a name. That year, the title The Tale-Bearer was selected, and it continues today as an important source of communication between the Association and its members.

By the end of 1974, Lake Caroline had grown to seventy-eight homes, with fifteen families living in the community full time. Recognizing the needs of the rapidly growing community, the Board hired Harry Gosper, a World War II Marine Corps veteran, as the Association's first Executive Manager. During the next two years, the number of homes reached one hundred, with Gil and Conchita Gilbertson building the community's 100th home.

The following years brought additional changes. American Realty declared bankruptcy. Although this did not directly affect the Association, it did affect some property owners. Those with unresolved claims against the developer, including owners whose lots failed percolation ("perc") tests, were required to file proofs of claim in the bankruptcy proceedings.

Mail delivery marked another important milestone. In May 1977, delivery changed from the security gate to direct home delivery throughout Lake Caroline.

Personnel turnover presented ongoing challenges during the early years. Between March 1977 and March 1978, the Association hired three Executive Managers. Following this period of frequent management changes, a Maintenance Manager was hired, and Office Manager Barbara Blanton assumed many of the Executive Manager's day-to-day responsibilities.

After its members, Lake Caroline itself has always been the Association's most valuable asset. The Board of Directors in the 1970s, like today's Board, recognized its responsibility to preserve and manage the lake. In 1977, the Association accepted a proposal from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (now Virginia Tech) to conduct a

comprehensive lake management survey. The study established baseline ecological data, developed a lake management plan, and recommended management practices based on scientific findings. VPI&SU funded 42 percent of the project's cost. The survey took two years to complete, during which three assistant professors working on the project resided with Gil and Conchita Gilbertson.

Also in 1977, residents organized the Lake Caroline Civic League. The organization became an active part of the community by assisting residents in need, sponsoring community programs, and organizing holiday events and other activities.

That same year, Bill Carlson resigned as Maintenance Manager, and Marty Goettler was hired as his replacement. It was also the year Dave Coyner joined the maintenance staff.

Lake Caroline continued its steady growth, and by the end of 1978 the community had 132 homes, with forty-five full-time residents. As the roads began showing signs of wear, the Board of Directors implemented seasonal weight restrictions from November through March during periods of adverse weather.

In May 1979, Yvonne Sale was hired as a part-time employee. That same year, the Lake Caroline Beautification Commission was established.

The 1980s

Lake Caroline entered the 1980s with 141 homes and 65 full-time residents. During the decade, a tennis court was constructed, and newspaper delivery was extended along Caroline Drive.

In 1981, the Association began accepting credit cards for payments. The U.S. Postal Service changed Lake Caroline addresses from Route 2 addresses to box numbers, and the Ladysmith Post Office moved to its present location.

Lake Caroline experienced another busy year in 1983. The Caroline County Board of Supervisors designated Lake Caroline streets and roads as public highways for law enforcement purposes. At a special meeting, the Board of Directors repealed a $40.00 house assessment, and the Property Owners Association of Virginia (POAVA) was formed. A shoreline protection plan, based on the VPI&SU reports, was approved, and a self-supporting Teen Club was established. The club proved successful for several years. By year's end, the community had grown to 185 homes with 97 full-time resident families. Recognizing the community's continued growth and the need for long-range planning, the Board agreed to hire an Executive Manager.

The pace continued in 1984. The Association purchased Lot 2 (the lot on the right at the main entrance), authorized a $34,000 expansion of the office, approved the rental of portable restrooms for the recreation areas, and authorized the Ladysmith Rescue Squad Auxiliary to operate its food trailer in the Lodge and Beach area on Saturdays,

Sundays, and holidays. An Executive Manager was hired in July but departed in September. Ted Haaser was subsequently hired to manage the Association's operations and supervise its employees. The LCPOA office also acquired its first computer in 1984. To help control excessive aquatic vegetation, 1,500 triploid grass carp were stocked in the lake in 1984, followed by another 1,500 in 1987. (Triploid grass carp are sterile fish commonly used to control aquatic vegetation in lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.)

In 1985, a new maintenance shop was constructed, Urban Security replaced Burns International as the security contractor, a television was purchased for the Lodge, and the pavilion at Little Beach was built.

The guardhouse was renovated in 1986. The Board of Directors approved the recommendations of the "Save the Lake" Committee, including a $125.00 special assessment to fund lake dredging. A Neighborhood Watch program was established, and the individual vehicle pass system was implemented. That same year, the Ladysmith Fire Department formed its dive team with seven members, four of whom were Lake Caroline residents. The team continues to use the community's pool and lake for training.

In May 1987, the Board of Directors appointed John Wandling, Bill Anderson, and Jim Gates to the Lake Management Committee. Their primary objective was to maintain water quality for both drinking water and recreational use. Under the leadership of Dr. Leonard Smock, Associate Professor at VCU, and the Lake Management Committee, the Association began publishing its Annual Water Quality Reports.

In June 1987, the Caroline County Circuit Court heard a case involving the Lake Caroline Restrictions. The case resulted from a construction project that exceeded the required six-month building period. The court ruled that the Lake Caroline Restrictions were both valid and enforceable.

Although all construction projects had long required Association approval, the Board adopted a new requirement in June 1987 that an approved building permit be prominently displayed at the construction site throughout the project.

On July 1, 1987, United Parcel Service (UPS) began delivering packages directly to homes within Lake Caroline, eliminating the need for Security to accept package deliveries.

In March 1988, in response to the community's continued growth, the Board of Directors adopted a policy prohibiting open burning within Lake Caroline. Later that year, the Association celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a community celebration on July 4.

In February 1989, following the resignation of Peter McGarrity, the Board of Directors

appointed Don Doering as Executive Manager. Later that year, the Board proposed increasing the minimum dwelling size from 900 square feet to 1,100 square feet. Because the change required written approval from two-thirds of the membership, it was submitted to the property owners but was defeated in April 1989.

On June 3, 1989, the Ruther Glen Post Office began delivering mail to every street in Lake Caroline, and Caroline County implemented the E-911 Emergency System. To eliminate duplicate street names within the county, Lake Caroline renamed nine of its streets. During the summer, the Board approved a Long-Range Plan and established a nine-member Advisory Committee to strengthen communication between the Board of Directors and the membership.

As Lake Caroline celebrated more than twenty years since its founding, the membership reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a strong and vibrant community by adopting a Community Plan in late 1989.

The first LCPOA Advisory Board met in December 1989. The lake was divided into seven zones, each represented by its own Advisory Board member. The Civic League also appointed a representative, while Executive Manager Don Doering represented the Board of Directors. The Advisory Board met monthly to provide recommendations and support to the Board of Directors.

The 1990s

As Lake Caroline entered the 1990s, both the community and the surrounding Ladysmith area continued to grow and change. One notable milestone occurred on May 31, 1990, when a traffic light was installed at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 639 (Ladysmith Road), marking a significant change for the area. It is difficult to imagine Ladysmith without it today.

In June 1990, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted an electrofishing survey of the lake and recommended that future fish stocking be limited to channel catfish and walleye. That same year, members began enjoying community bingo nights, a tradition that continued for several years. The Association also purchased a 20-foot pontoon boat for lake patrol and maintenance operations. Several new policies were adopted in 1990, including a lot take-back policy, an employee evaluation policy, and a collection policy. Permanent traffic islands were also constructed at Blind Hill and at the intersection of Burr Drive and Lake Caroline Drive.

The Lake Caroline Bass Club held its first meeting in January 1991. In August, Sandra Cash was hired as Assistant Bookkeeper and began work the same day she was interviewed. July 1991 brought another change when Executive Manager Don Doering resigned, prompting another search for new leadership. Association President Jerry Norville assumed the Executive Manager's responsibilities until September 1991, when Bill Waldron was hired. Mr. Waldron's tenure was brief, and he resigned in April 1992.

Once again, President Norville assumed the additional responsibilities until Marybeth Glaser was hired as Executive Manager in August 1992.

The Maintenance Department also experienced significant changes in 1992. Maintenance Manager Bill Green retired, and Keith Pirogue was hired as his replacement. Mr. Pirogue's tenure lasted only thirty days, after which William Whittaker was promoted to Maintenance Manager. Following Mr. Whittaker's passing in August 1992, Dave Coyner was promoted to lead the Maintenance Department.

In 1993, Judge Payton Farmer approved the order creating the Lake Caroline Sanitary District. That same year, the Board of Directors approved the formation of the Lake Caroline Sailors Cheerleading Squad. The community also celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a boat parade and the Lake Caroline Pageant as the featured events.

In February 1994, Lake Caroline, along with much of the East Coast, was struck by what became known as the "Ice Storm of the Century." Fallen trees blocked community roads, and some areas were without electricity for up to three days. Throughout the emergency, Lake Caroline residents demonstrated a strong spirit of volunteerism, helping neighbors and assisting the Maintenance Staff wherever needed.

Later in 1994, the Board of Directors adopted an annex to the Caroline County Emergency Operations Plan. The Board also approved new regulations prohibiting boats and trailers from being parked at the Marina for more than one day unless a 72-hour parking permit had been issued by the Association office. During the same year, school bus service was reorganized, replacing a single pickup location with six neighborhood bus stops throughout the community.

The fall of 1994 brought another change in management when Marybeth Glaser resigned as Executive Manager. In January 1995, Don Doering returned to serve once again as Executive Manager.

In 1995, the Lake Caroline All-State Cheerleading Squad and the Caroline High School Cheerleading Squad were selected to participate in the Hula Bowl festivities in Honolulu, Hawaii.

The Lake Caroline Historic Committee researched and led the restoration of the historic cemetery located on American Drive. Known as the Golansville Cemetery, the Quaker burial ground contains graves dating back to 1805, including members of the Cobb, Terrell, and Ricks families. Research also revealed that W. L. Cobb helped rewrite the Virginia Constitution in 1910, and that Confederate soldiers are buried in the cemetery. The restoration was completed through the dedicated efforts of many community volunteers.

Lake Caroline Historical Timeline

July 2, 1968 – First lot sold to James L. Carlson.

July 15, 1968 – The Caroline County Board of Supervisors issued the subdivision certificate authorizing construction of Lake Caroline.

July 31, 1968 – All land required for the Lake Caroline development was acquired.

August 28, 1968 – The Lake Caroline Property Owners Association (LCPOA) was officially approved.

August 19, 1969 – The lake reached its full level, aided by Hurricane Camille.

September 1, 1970 – Caroline Water Company began providing water service to Lake Caroline.

January 1, 1971 – The first LCPOA newsletter was published.

May 29, 1971 – The Lodge, beaches, and swimming pool officially opened.

August 13, 1971 – The first Annual Meeting of the LCPOA was held.

September 1, 1971 – The snack bar in the Lodge was discontinued.

December 31, 1971 – The LCPOA office relocated from Ladysmith to the Lodge.

May 1, 1972 – A new guardhouse was constructed.

August 1, 1972 – The campground was completed.

May 1, 1973 – The Association contracted with a professional security agency, replacing its in-house security force.

December 16, 1974 – The Association hired its first Executive Manager.

September 4, 1975 – American Realty filed for bankruptcy.

July 11, 1976 – The election date for officers and directors was changed from August to February.

October 1, 1976 – Construction of the 100th home (W. L. Gilbertson) was approved.

December 24, 1976 – The first baby was born at Lake Caroline (to the R. S. King family).

May 7, 1977 – Mail delivery was changed from pickup at the gate to delivery along

Caroline Drive.

June 3, 1977 – The Lake Caroline Civic League held its first organizational meeting.

June 30, 1977 – A brick storage addition was constructed on the pool side of the Lodge.

November 1, 1977 – The Board authorized a lake management survey by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI&SU). The study began on March 1, 1978, and was completed in 1980.

May 15, 1979 – Drainage pipes were installed beneath the roadway at the catch basin to help prevent flooding.

July 6, 1979 – The Beautification Commission was established.

August 15, 1979 – Two new tennis courts were constructed near the Lodge.

August 26, 1980 – Newspaper delivery was authorized along Caroline Drive.

September 24, 1980 – A new piano was purchased for the Lodge.

June 30, 1982 – The U.S. Postal Service assigned street addresses to replace post office box numbers.

October 15, 1984 – The school bus stop was relocated from the front gate to the clubhouse.

October 22, 1984 – The lake was stocked with 1,500 triploid (weed-eating) grass carp.

December 20, 1984 – A computer system was installed in the LCPOA office.

September 1, 1985 – Construction of the pavilion at Little Beach was completed.

January 1, 1986 – Maintenance operations moved to the new facility at Ladysmith Lake.

July 1, 1986 – The multipurpose pavilion adjacent to the tennis courts was completed.

October 7, 1986 – Lake dredging began and was completed on April 30, 1987.

November 15, 1986 – A new guardhouse was completed.

March 31, 1987 – The lake was restocked with an additional 1,500 triploid (weed-eating) grass carp.

July 1, 1987 – United Parcel Service (UPS) began delivering packages directly to homes.

June 3, 1989 – The U.S. Postal Service began home delivery to all Lake Caroline residences.